

V. Platov–140 Composition Tourney Prize Report

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Introduction

It was a great honor, and a great pleasure, to judge this tournament that honors the 140th birthday of a one of the elders of study composition. Vasily Nikolayevich Platov's studies are a delight for every solver and chess player: short, spicy and aesthetically pleasing. The Platov brothers did much to elevate endgame studies from simple tactical puzzles or displays of standard technical manoeuvres to a proper form of art. Of course, the field of study composition has developed in the meantime and studies "in the style of V. Platov" (or the Platov brothers) would hardly be competitive in modern tourneys. Nevertheless, I have tried to follow "classical" evaluation criteria: original and interesting themes, clarity of the main idea, economic implementation, thematic unity of the content (including the introduction), density of the play, visual elegance and (humanly understandable) correctness of the lines. For me, the ideal study is a stylized fight on the 64 squares whose dramaturgy should follow the same laws of building and resolving tension like a theater play on the stage.

Before I proceed to my verdicts, I would like say a couple of words. First of all, I would like to thank Sergey Osintsev for suggesting me as a judge, although I am a newcomer composing and judging endgame studies. I would also like to thank Aleksey Oganessian for his work as a tournament director and his willingness to accommodate my requests. However, I also have to criticize that the entries were not sent as an anonymous pgn file, but as a pdf file with the authors' names. Since I wanted to judge the tournament anonymously, as it is the proper procedure for formal tourneys, I had to rely on Martin Minski's help. Martin compiled a complete pgn file from the pgns that Oganessian received from the authors and added the missing entries by hand. I would like to thank him for this enormous amount of

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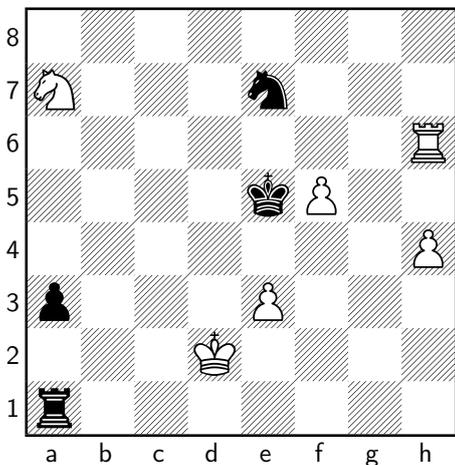
work and I hope that in the next (formal) tourney that I judge, I will start from an anonymous pgn file. I would also like to thank my friends in the Netherlands, the Grandmasters and International Masters Arthur Pijpers, Casper Schoppen and Robin Swinkels for their input regarding some specific studies.

In total, 38 studies took part in the tourney (twin studies were counted as one study). In my personal opinion, there were few outstanding works, but the overall level was good, with many interesting and enjoyable submissions. In the end, 15 studies were taken into the award (three prizes, six honorable mentions and six commendations). In my comments on the studies, I have given only the most crucial lines; the full set of relevant variations can be found in the pgn file.

Authors whose works were not included in the award find my comments on their submissions at the end of the file. Some of the non-included studies are quite original and have potential; however, I think it is better if the authors improve the implementation and resubmit at a different tourney. I wish them good luck with doing so!

Prizes

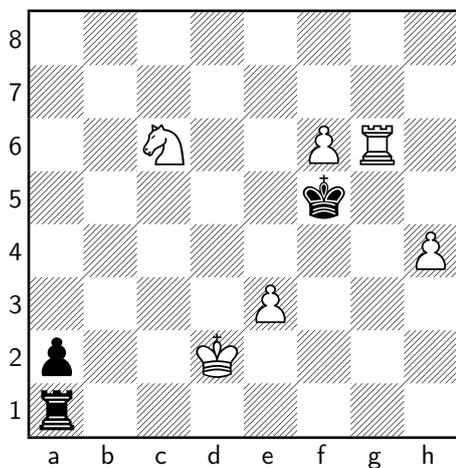
1st prize: Sergiy Didukh (A14)



1 f6 ♖g6 Black wants the white pawn on f7 instead of e7. After the immediate 1... ♜d1+ 2 ♕×d1 a2 3 fxe7 a1♙+ 4 ♖e2 ♜a2+ 5 ♕e1 ♜a1+ 6 ♕f2 ♜a2+ 7 ♕g3 ♜g8+ 8 ♖h2 ♜a2+ 9 ♕h3 ♜f7 10 ♖c6+ White wins smoothly.

1... ♜d5 2 f7 ♜f1 3 ♖c6+ ♕e4 4 ♜e6+

2 ♜×g6 a2 3 ♖c6+ ♕f5

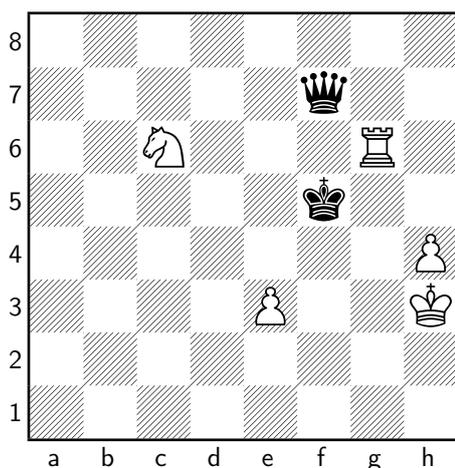


4 f7 It is too late to stop the black pawn: 4 ♜g5+ ♕×f6 5 ♜a5 ♜h1 6 ♜×a2 ♜h2+ and Black draws with this classical trick.

4... ♜d1+ 5 ♕e2 ♜e1+ 6 ♕f2

It is important not to take the rook too early so that the white king is can hide on h3 after a1♙+ and ♜a2+.

6... ♜f1+ 7 ♕×f1 a1♙+ 8 ♕g2 ♜a2+ 9 ♕h3 ♜×f7



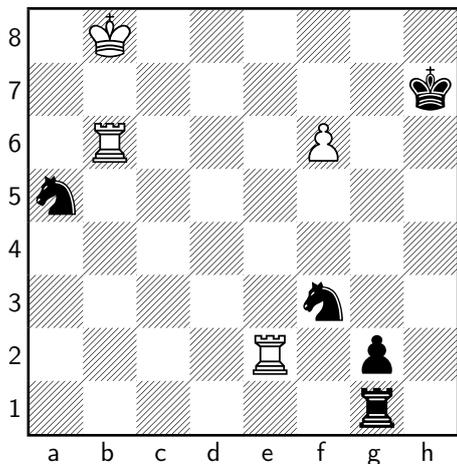
10 ♖e6 Black is helpless: if he takes the knight, White wins he queen with a knight fork and otherwise, Nd4+ is (model) checkmate. With the king on g3 (e.g., after 6.♙×e1), Black could simply respond 10...♚g7+. All White pieces cooperate beautifully. **1-0**

This main idea of the study is simple: the quiet sacrifice ♖g6–e6 that restores the cooperation between the dispersed White pieces and leaves Black the choice between mate and queen loss. To my knowledge, it has first been shown by Vasily Platov in 1904 in the *Rigaer Tageblatt* (+3101.33h3g5), albeit in a rather clumsy version.¹ The present study may be the optimal representation of Platov’s old idea and so it is a suitable and deserved winner of the tourney.

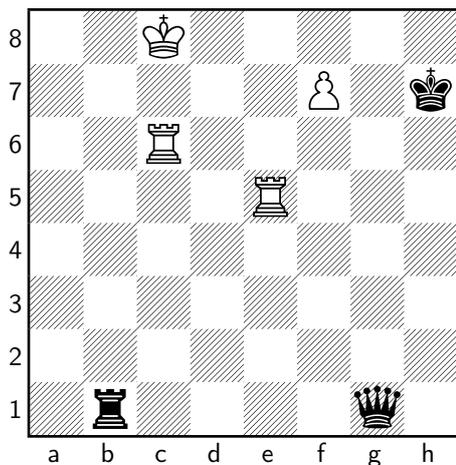
What makes this study special is the slow buildup of the tension: we begin with a natural endgame position, where Black sacrifices a knight in order to force the White pawn to f7 and to operate with the motifs ♖e1+/a1♚+ and ♖h1/♖h2+. White responds with transferring his king to the kingside, resisting the temptation to capture early and secretly prepares the mating net. A dense, elegant fight with almost equal material, perfect economy and a stunning resolution.

¹Oh yes, the good old times when there were German-language newspapers in Russia. By the way, I would have appreciated if the author had mentioned the predecessor, as it was done by Bazlov, Nielsen and Staudte/Korányi. I don’t think there is a problem with originality, but it is just good practice.

2nd prize: Luis Miguel González (A11)



1 f7 1 ♖e7+ ♜g8 2 ♜a8 ♘c6 3 ♗xc6 ♜a1+ 4 ♜b8 ♜b1+ and Black draws. Now White is ready to reply to ♜g7 with ♗f6, but Black responds by sacrificing both knights: 1... ♘e5 2 ♗xe5 ♘c6+ 3 ♗xc6 ♜b1+ 4 ♜c8 This is important: the try 4 ♜c7 g1♗ 5 f8♗ ♜b7+ 6 ♜xb7 ♗b6+ 7 ♜xb6 would allow Black to draw by stalemate. The main line looks similar, but we will soon see the difference to the try. 4... g1♗



5 f8♗

A true surprise! After 5 f8♗ ♜b8+ 6 ♜xb8 ♗b6+ 7 ♗xb6 Black draws again by stalemate, and after 5... ♗g4+ 6 ♗ef5, in spite of having the combined power of queen and rook at his disposal, the pinned white rook and the open board, Black can do nothing against the White attack: 6... ♜b5 7 ♗c7+ ♜g6 8 ♗f6# 1-0

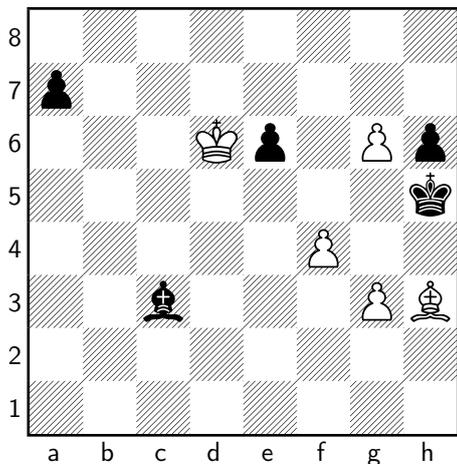
The study combines rook underpromotion (with two rooks already present) and stalemate counterplay with a logical element on move 4: after 4. ♜c7 the underpromotion idea 5.f8♗ does not work due to 5... ♗g7+. The queen check on g4, by contrast, can be parried. The final assault of three White

rooks in the aristocratic major pieces final gives a special twist to this study. The introduction is a bit conventional, but technically flawless.

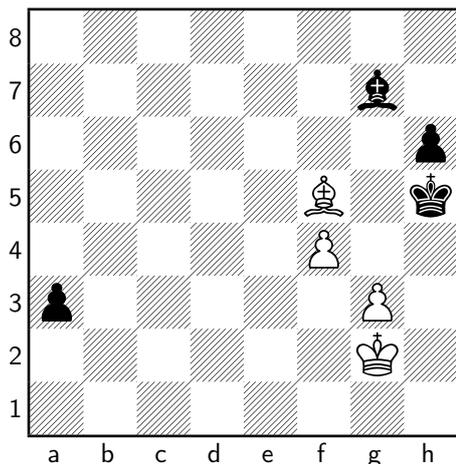
There are surprisingly few studies with three rooks in the database, most of them tasks with successive underpromotions and one of the rooks disappearing immediately. The only study which shows a proper three rooks attack is Matous 1995 (+3200.12h2e7, or the 1998 version +3200.12g2d7, shifted by one file), and there, White does everything with check, including the rook promotion.

The author seems to like the fight of three rooks against the queen, since he composed a study on that theme for the 2020 World Cup, too, but this one is much more skilful and elegant. It constitutes real progress and I hope it inspires work along similar lines.

3rd prize: Steffen Nielsen (A26)



1 g7 First White blocks the exit road for the enemy king. 1... ♖×g7 2 ♜×e6 ♝g6 After a bishop move White checkmate is inevitable: 2... ♜d4 3 ♜f5 ♜f2 4 ♜g4 mate. Now White transfers the king to h3 to checkmate with g4+. 3 ♜f5+ ♜h5 4 ♜d5 a5 5 ♜e4 a4 6 ♜f3 a3 7 ♜g2



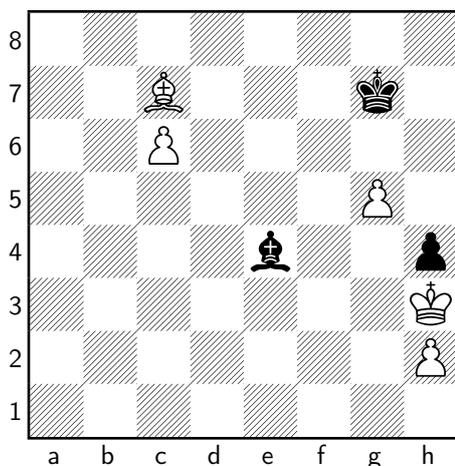
7... ♜e5, with the idea that 8. fxe5 a2 breaks the mating net and even wins for Black. 8 ♜h3 ♜×f4 9 g×f4 a2 But now we see the difference to 8.fxe5: with the pawn on f4 instead of g3, White checkmates with 10 ♜e6 a1 ♜ 11 ♜f7#. 1-0

This looks all simple, almost too simple. But I challenge anybody who disagrees with my verdict to set up a similarly dense endgame with opposite-colored bishops and few pawns. The White manoeuvring on the white squares leaves a strong aesthetic impression and three checkmate motifs are skillfully interwoven. Black's counterplay is also interesting. The only small complaint is the move 2. ♜×e6, probably required to decoy the bishop to g7 in the key move.

The literature on opposite-colored bishop endgame studies is of course

richer than for three rooks, so I just took a sample. My impression was that most studies, even by great composers, concentrate on imprisoned bishops and promotion tactics and stalemate tricks (a classic is Gorgiev's +0040.12c5g5). Natural, open positions without immediate tactical blows are rare. The motif 10.♔e6 has also been shown by Vivas Font in 1953 (+0010.36g3h5), but in my opinion, this does not diminish the originality of the work.

For the record, the small study +0040.31h3g7 by Vasily Platov (*Deutsche Schachzeitung*, 1906) features the same material and the same position of the white kings, with opposite colors. As a tribute to the jubilee, I let the prize section close with the reprint.



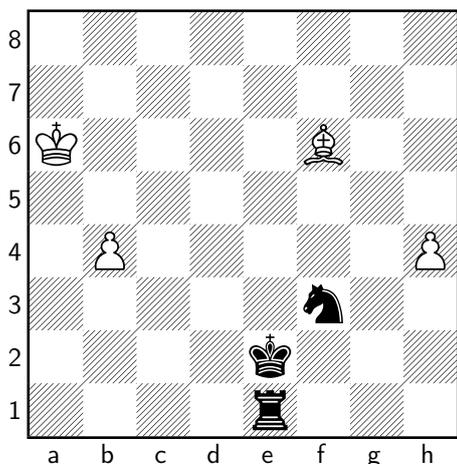
1 ♗e5+ ♔g6 2 c7 ♖h5. Now Black is ready to counter 3.c8♖ by ... ♗f5+, but White plays 3 c8♗, winning.

Honorable Mentions

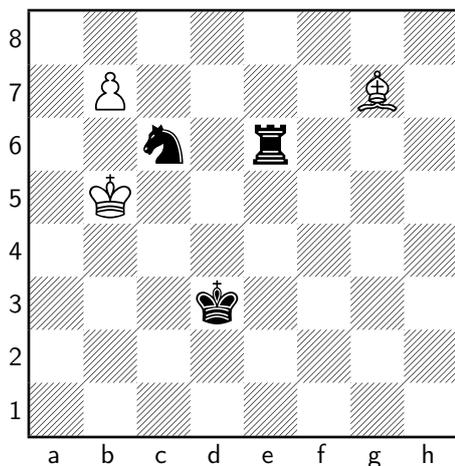
Ordering the honorable mentions turned out to be a more difficult task than ordering the prizes. This was also due to the fact that they contain very different types of studies: the brilliant tactical ambush of A21 competes against the dense tactical fight of A25 and the accurate technical conversions and defensive efforts of A2, A9 and A20, respectively. Since my preference among them varies according to daytime, I decided not to order them at all. I present them in alphabetical order, with the special honorable mention at the end.²

²I do not think the special honorable mention is worse than the rest, but it is an elaboration on a classical study by Troitzky and so I separated it from the rest.

Honorable mention: Pavel Arestov and Poul Rewitz (A2)



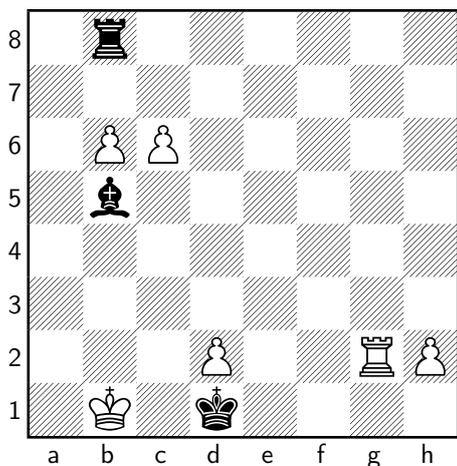
1 b5 ♖d3 2 b6 ♜e6 3 ♗g7. The refutation of other bishop moves is notable, e.g., 3 ♗b2 ♜d2 4 ♖a7 ♜b3 5 b7 ♜c5 6 b8♙ ♜a6#. or 3 ♗b2 ♜d2 4 ♖a7 ♜b3 5 b7 ♜c5 6 b8♙ ♜a6 3... ♜xh4 4 ♖a5 Again, other moves lose, e.g. 4 ♖a7 ♜f5 5 b7 ♜e7 6 b8♙ ♜c6+ 7 ♖b7 ♜xb8 8 ♖xb8 ♜e8+ 9 ♖c7 ♜e7+ 10 ♖d6 ♜xg7. 4... ♜f5 5 b7 ♜e7 6 ♖b5 ♜c6



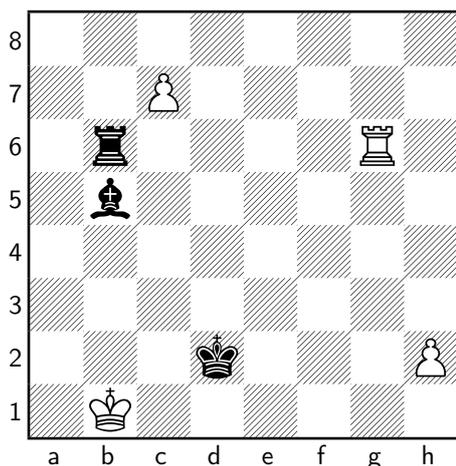
7 ♗e5 ♜a7+ 8 ♖c5. Still, White needs to play carefully: 8 ♖a5 ♖c4 9 b8♙ ♜c6+ 10 ♖a4 ♜xb8 11 ♗xb8 ♜a6#. 8... ♜xe5+ 9 ♖b6 1/2-1/2

I am not sure that the amount of exclamation marks assigned to White's moves by the authors is justified, but this is an instructive and cleanly implemented endgame showing the fight of the bishop and the pawn against rook and knight. While not being terribly exciting, there is a lot of content, with excellent study material for practical players. 7. ♗e5 is an appealing resolution and there are good tries in move three, four and eight with precise tactical refutations.

Honorable mention: Michal Hlinka and Luboš Kekely (A9)



1 ♖g1+. White first needs to remove the d-pawn which shields the king against checks: 1 c7 ♜×b6 2 ♜g6 ♙c6+ 3 ♚a2 ♚c2 4 c8♞ ♜b2+ 5 ♚a3 ♜b3+ with perpetual check. 1... ♙×d2 2 c7 ♜×b6 3 ♜g6



3... ♙d3+. Note also 3... ♙c6+ 4 ♚a1 ♚c2 5 ♜g2+ ♙×g2 6 c8♞+. 4 ♚a2 ♙c4+ 5 ♚a1. Again, precision is required: 5 ♚a3 ♜b3+ 6 ♚a4 ♜c3 7 ♜g2+ ♙e2 draws only. 5... ♜b3 6 ♜b6. After 6 c8♞ ♜a3+ 7 ♚b2 ♜b3+ 8 ♚a2 ♜c3+ 9 ♚b2 ♜b3+ Black has perpetual check. 6... ♜a3+ 7 ♚b2 ♜a2+ 8 ♚b1 ♜c2 9 ♜b2 ♜×b2+ 10 ♚×b2 ♙e6 11 h4 ♚e3 12 h5 ♚f4 13 h6. 1-0

A good study showing an intense fight for promotion of the c-pawn with inventive perpetual check counterplay by Black and two spectacular white rook sacrifices. I like that the authors managed to let the otherwise passive h-pawn decide the fight in the mainline. I have three minor complaints, but none of them serious.

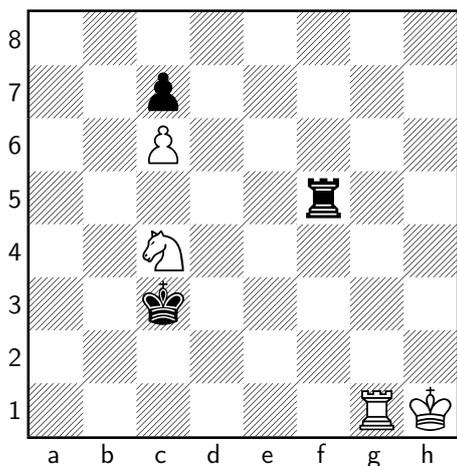
1. The logical removal of the pawn on d2 in move 1 is not terribly impressive; it is clear that Black needs it as an “umbrella”.
2. The fight of queen and pawn against rook and bishop after 6... ♜×b6 is

highly complex: only the tablebase tells us that White wins (62 moves), and high manoeuvring accuracy is required. This sideline spoils the beauty of the study a bit.

3. It would be preferrable if there was no technical pawn on b6.

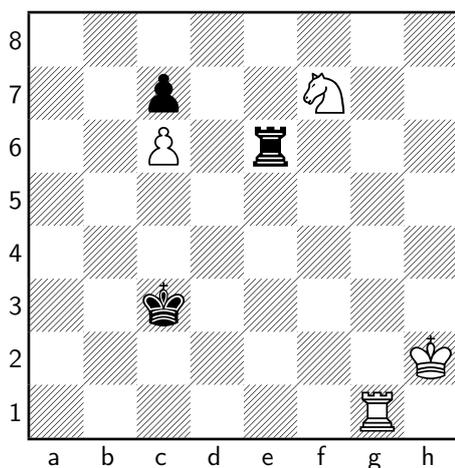
All in all, a fine and instructive study.

Honorable Mention: Mikhail Croitor (A20)



1 ♘d6

The right square: Black draws after the analogous 1 ♘b6 ♖h5+ 2 ♔g2 ♔d2 3 ♘c4+ ♔d3 4 ♖c1 ♖c5. Note the fine move 2...♔d2, threatening perpetual and taking away the c1 square from the rook. 1...♖h5+ 2 ♔g2 ♖h6 3 ♘f7 ♖g6+ 4 ♔h2 ♖e6



Now 5.♘d8 would just be a draw after 5...♖d6 since after the forced 6.♖g8, White cannot improve the position of his pieces. However, there is a stunning tactical resolution: 5 ♖d1 ♔c2 6 ♖d6 cxd6 7 c7 ♖e8 8 ♘d8 1-0

Judging from the moves in the mainline and the thematic try, this study should be a prize. White has a choice between two knight analogous sacrifices, and one of them is refuted with a brilliant drawing idea (2...♔d2!). The knight sacrifice is followed up later by a rook sacrifice on the same square, and this time it cannot be declined and the white pawn promotes. Wonderful.

However, too much content is hidden. The main question of the study is when Black can construct a fortress with his rook due to the passivity of

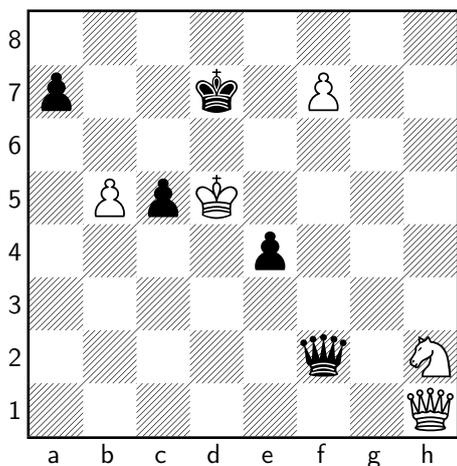
the white knight on d8 or b8. It is relatively clear that the configuration ♖d1/♘d8 wins for White (e.g., after 5...♗b4) since he can approach his king and then play ♖d1 and check from below. However, there are various lines relating to this fortress where proceedings remain opaque to me, e.g.:

- 2...♗d2: the White knight needs to go to b8 here. Why does this win? This is even a thematic defense, compare 1.♘b6.
- 4...♗f6: a tenacious defense, after which White needs to play the knight to b8 again, starting with 5.♗g3+! (only move).

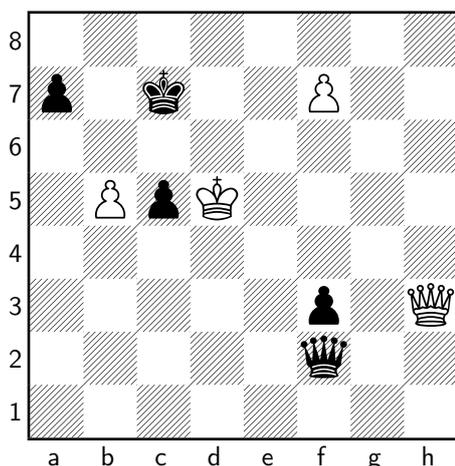
Given the relative simplicity of the winning sacrifice 6.♗d6 as opposed to breaking the fortress, I can't resist the impression that the author decided to raise a beautiful sideline to his mainline. For this reason, I did not award the study a prize.

I am aware that this sounds a bit harsh, but technically oriented studies should center around winning and drawing plans and promote the understanding of endgames. The author's work does so only partially.

Honorable mention: Martin Minski (A21)



The threat is Qd4#. 1 ♖f3. Opens the h-file and closes the f-file. 1... exf3
2 ♜h3+ ♔c7

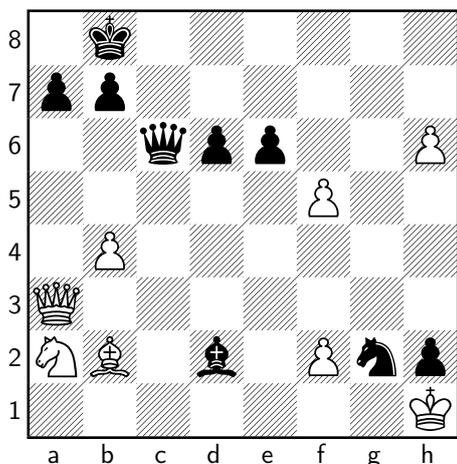


3 b6+. A crucial zwischenzug. After the thematic 3 ♜c8+ ♔xc8 4 ♔c6 ♜d4 5 f8♜+ ♜d8 6 ♜f7 Black wins with 6... ♜b6+. Also 3 f8♜ ♜d4+ 4 ♔e6 ♜d7+ 5 ♔f6 ♜xh3 fails.

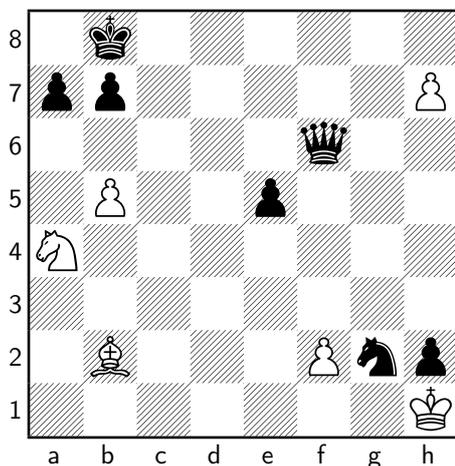
3... axb6 4 ♜c8+ ♔xc8 5 ♔c6 ♜d4 6 f8♜+ ♜d8 7 ♜f7. Thanks to 3.b6+ the reply ... ♜b6+ is not possible and mate is inevitable. 1-0

A small and unassuming idea, which was also shown by Yuri Bazlov in his prize-winning study at the Stigter-64 JT (+4043.21g3d7). I prefer Bazlov's implementation all in all, but it has heavy analytical sidelines whereas here, everything is crystal-clear; this is a great one for solving. The main point of the study is the nice logical twist 3.b6+. While there is not much new under the sun in this composition, and the content is limited, it leaves a pleasant and elegant aftertaste. The implementation is impeccable from a technical point of view (note also 1. Nf3!).

Honorable mention: Vladimir Neistadt (A25)



1 b5 ♔d5 2 ♔xd6+ ♔xd6 3 h7 ♘c3 4 ♗xc3 ♔d4 5 f6 ♔xf6 6 ♗a4 e5



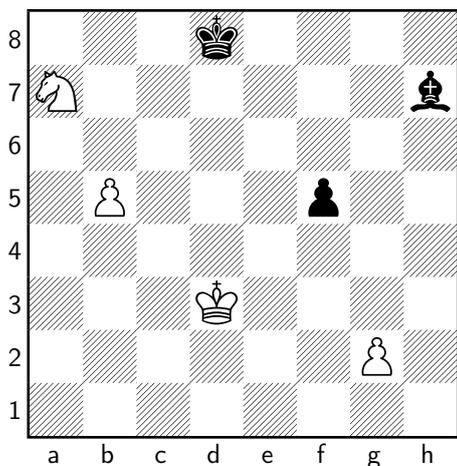
7 ♗b6 The point of the study, preparing the stalemate setup and threatening ♗d7+. Note that swapping moves with f2-f4 does not work due to the additional defense ... ♔c7. 7... a×b6 8 f4 ♗×f4 9 ♘×e5+ ♔×e5 10 h8 ♔+ ♔×h8. With stalemate. 1/2-1/2

At first I was considering a special prize for this study, but after comparing it against the studies in the recent tourney in honor of Vasha Neidze I decided that a honorable mention is enough. The play—including the black counterplay with moves such as 3... ♘c3!—is inventive, captivating and humanly understandable: I especially liked that 1.b5 does not only prepare ♔xd6+, but also more hiddenly Nc3-a4-b6, blocking the queenside. However, the White drawing plan is in the end too straightforward to merit a higher distinction, and the captures (“exchanges”) on d6 and e5 make the study look rather heavy-handed. Same for the white king, who is almost suffocated by the h2 pawn. There is also an annoying analytic sideline related to the resulting B/N endgame after 8... ♔h6, where White must find

some only moves.³ Still, 7.♖b6!! is a great tactical blow and this study is a fine creative achievement.

³After eventual ♖x5, White draws if he can blockade on b4, but not if he tries to blockade on b2.

Special Honorable Mention: Yuri Bazlov (A5)



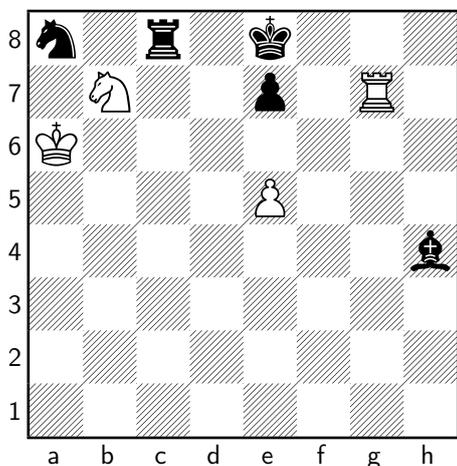
1 b6. This is better than 1. Nc6+ Kc7 2. Ne7 Kd6 3. b6 f4+ 4. Kd4 Bb1 5. Nd5 Kc6 6. Ke5 Bh7 7. Kxf4 Bb1 8. Ke5 Bh7 9. g4 Bb1 10. g5 Bh7 11. Kf6 Be4 12. Ke5 Bb1 and White cannot advance. **1... ♔d7 2 ♔d4 ♔d6 3 ♔e3.** The triangulation manoeuvre ♔d3–d4–e3 is remarkable, especially since it is not about passing the move to Black. White first lures the black king to d6 so that after ♔e3 and the black reply ... ♙g8, White can activate his knight with check. **3... ♙g8 4 ♘c8+ ♔d7 5 ♘e7 ♙a2 6 ♔d2 f4 7 ♔c1 ♔d6 8 ♔b2 ♙c4 9 b7 ♔c7 10 ♘c6 ♔xb7 11 ♘a5+.** **1-0**

The author has managed to develop a classic by Troitzky (+0031.21e1e5), rendering the position more open and the play more subtle and fluent to the non-frontal position of the kingside pawns.⁴ The play is instructive and adds new nuances like the aforementioned king manoeuvre ♔d3–d4–e3 and the transition to a won pawn endgame after 6... ♙b1 with the manoeuvre ♘d5 and ♘c3. There is also a surprising and instructive drawing fortress with the bishop against knight and two pawns in the thematic try. Unlike other developments of classical studies, this one does not subtract anything from the original content and so, a special honorable mention is deserved.

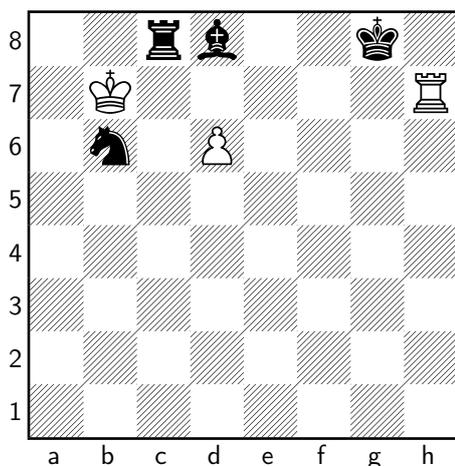
⁴Troitzky has the pawns on e2 and e4.

Commendations

Commendation: Pavel Arestov and Michal Hlinka (A3)



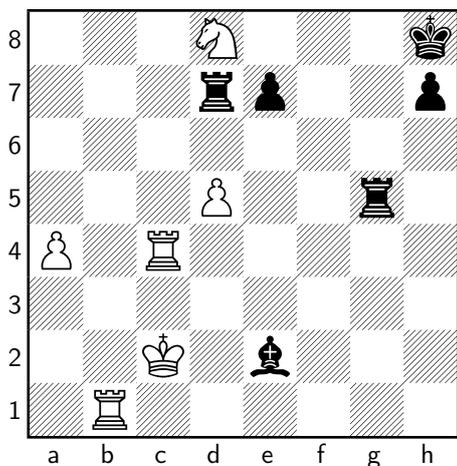
1 Nxd6+ exd6 2 exd6 Qf8 Notable is also 2... Rc4 3 Qb7 Ra4 4 Qc6 Ra6+ 5 Qb7 Ra4 6 Qc6 with positional draw. 3 Rh7 Nd8 4 Qa7 This triangulation is important since White loses due to zugzwang after 4 Qb7 Nb6 5 Rh8+ Qg7 6 Re8 Qf7 7 Rh8 Qe6 8 d7 Qxd7 . 4... Nb6 5 Qb7 Qg8



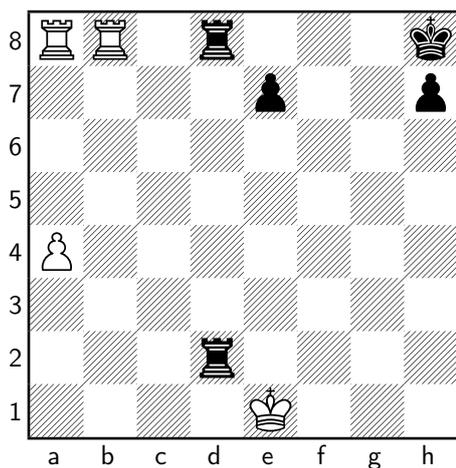
6 Rd7 Qf8 7 Rh7 Ra8 8 Rh8+ Qg7 9 Re8 Qf7 10 Rh8 Rc8 11 d7 Ra8 12 Rh7+ Qg8 13 Rh6 1/2-1/2

Instructive play of rook and the two pawns against rook and two minor pieces in an open and natural position, with positional draw motives and an attractive introductory sacrifice. On the downside, the mutual zugzwang is not particularly deep (White simply triangulates).

Commendation: Aleksey Gasparyan (A7)



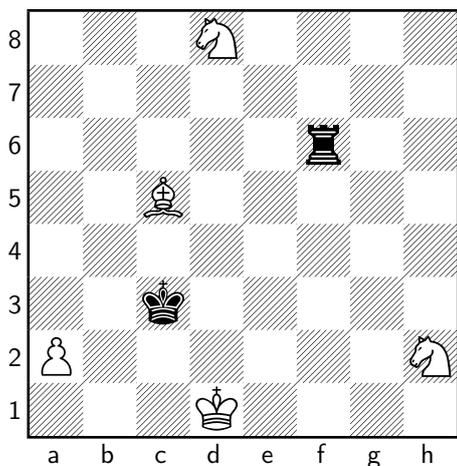
1 ♖c8 ♘a6 2 ♜a8 ♘d3+ 3 ♙×d3 ♜g×d5+ 4 ♚e4 ♜d4+ 5 ♚e3 The king must move down: 5 ♚e5 ♜7d5+ 6 ♚e6 ♜×d8 5... ♜d3+ 6 ♚e2 ♜d2+ 7 ♚e1 ♜×d8 8 ♜bb8



Now, White moves his king upwards again: 8... ♜d1+ 9 ♚e2 ♜d2+ 10 ♚e3 ♜d3+ 11 ♚e4 ♜d4+ 12 ♚e5 ♜d5+ 13 ♚e6 ♜d6+ 14 ♚f7 ♜f6+ 15 ♚×e7 ♜×b8 16 ♜×b8+ ♚g7 17 ♜g8+ ♚×g8 18 ♚×f6 ♚f8 19 a5. 1-0

Appealing systematic movement of the white monarch, natural position, good black counterplay (2... ♘d3+), clear lines and a pretty finish (17. ♜g8+). There is only one flaw, but it is major: the white knight on d8 which is captured without having moved.

Commendation: Mikhail Gromov and Oleg Pervakov (A12)

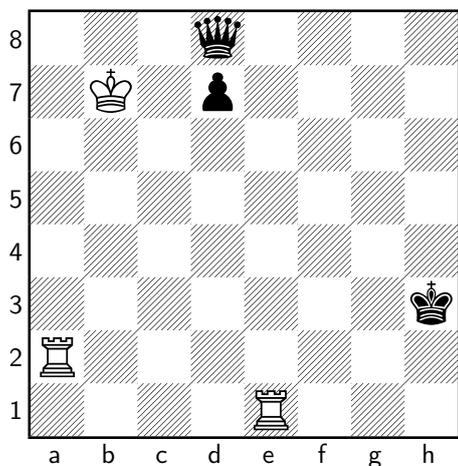


1 ♖c1 ♜h6 2 ♘f3 ♜c6 3 ♘c6 ♜xf3 4 ♙b4+ The thematic try **4 ♙d4+ ♖d3**
5 ♘e5+ ♖e4 6 ♘xf3 ♖xf3 7 a4 ♖e4 8 a5 ♖d5 9 a6 ♖c6 leaves White with a
 draw only since the bishop does not reach the a5-d8 diagonal in time.

4... ♖d3 5 ♘e5+ ♖e4 6 ♘xf3 ♖xf3 7 a4 ♖e4 8 a5 ♖d5 9 a6 ♖c6 10 ♙a5
1-0

The differentiation between the try **4. ♙d4+** and the solution **4. ♙b4+** in the resulting endgame with a-pawn and wrong bishop is noteworthy and implemented without flaws. That said, I am not too fond of studies which essentially show how to convert a (large) material advantage. In this case, the initial position contains many analytic sidelines (=the danger of having 7-men tablebases), and the static position of the black king does not benefit the introductory play. It would be better if the black king moved to c3 in order to set up counterplay. All in all, a decent study, but it does not leave a very strong aesthetic impression on me.

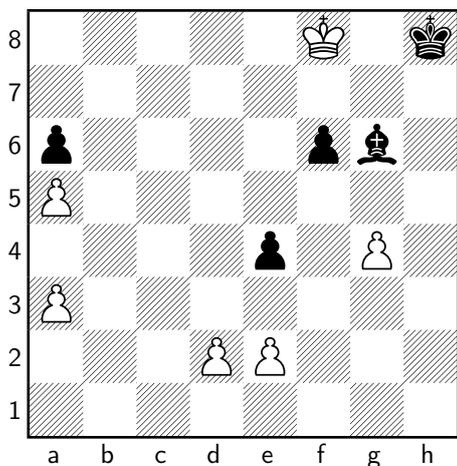
Commendation: Mikhail Croitor (A19)



1 ♖a3+ ♔h4 2 ♜h1+ ♔g4 2... ♔g5 3 ♜a8 ♜f6 4 ♜g8+, winning. 3 ♜a4+ ♔f5. White changes strategy after 3... ♔g3: he plays 4. ♜b1 followed by ♜b3+, ♜a2+ and ♜b1+, with checkmate on the first rank. 4... ♜g8 is then not possible due to ♜g1+. Compare also 3... ♔f3 4 ♜h3+ ♔g2 5 ♜b3 ♜h8 6 ♜a2+ ♔f1 7 ♜b1#. 4 ♜a8 ♜e7 5 ♜f8+ ♜xf8 6 ♜f1+ ♔e4 7 ♜xf8 1-0

A small, not particularly ambitious malyutka, which shows perfect coordination of the white rooks and an interesting change of strategy in the lines 3... ♔f3 and 3... ♔g3. This study could have been composed by the Platov brothers!

Commendation: Nikolay Ryabinin and Karen Sumbatyan (A37)



1 d4 exd3 2 exd3 ♖h7 3 d4 ♖h6 4 d5 ♙c2 5 d6 5 ♖f7 ♖g5 6 d6 ♙b3+ 7 ♖e7 ♙a4 loses since White is to move in this position. He must play 8.d7 (otherwise Black plays simply ♙d7 and ♙xg4) and the resulting endgame with the a7-pawn against the queen loses since the extra white pawn on a3 ruins the stalemate.

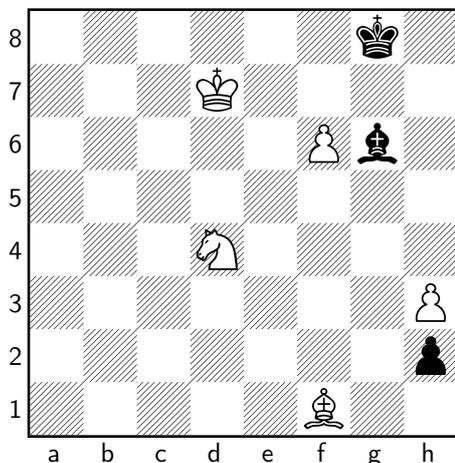
5... ♙a4 6 ♖f7 ♖g5 7 ♖e7. Now it is Black's move and so White can advance the a-pawn.

7... ♙c6 7... ♙b5 8 a4 ♙c6 9 d7 ♙x d7 10 ♖x d7 draws as well since the a4-pawn prevents the crucial ... ♙b5+. 8 a4 ♙x a4 9 d7 ♙x d7 10 ♖x d7. Having removed the a-pawn secures the draw, e.g.: 10... ♖xg4 11 ♖c7 f5 12 ♖b7 f4 13 ♖x a6 f3 14 ♖b7 f2 15 a6 f1 ♙ 16 a7. 1/2-1/2

This study shows mutual zugzwang as a way to fight for the square of the white a-pawn (on a3, on a4 or off the board). Foresight is essential: White needs the pawn on a4 in the endgame with the a7-pawn against the black queen; otherwise Black wins easily. The introduction with the exchange on d3 is not exciting; the authors might have started the study at move three. Also the play is a bit dull (White uses simple triangulation), but the content is interesting, hence a commendation.

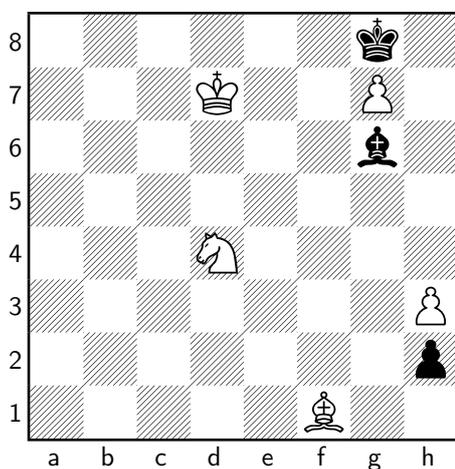
Special Commendation: Vladislav Tarasiuk (A34)

Version A:



1 ♖g2 ♖f7 2 ♜f3 ♖xh2 3 ♜xh2 ♖e5 4 ♖e7 4 ♜g4+ ♖f4 5 ♜d5 ♖g3 6 ♜e6 ♜e4 7 ♜e3 ♖f4 8 ♜g4 ♖g3 9 ♜e3 ♖f4 with positional draw. 4... ♖f4 5 ♖f6 White cannot change the order of ♖f6 and ♜f1: 5 ♜f1 ♜f5 6 ♖f6 ♜d3 7 ♖g7 ♖g5 8 ♜d2 ♖h4. An instructive drawing defense. 5... ♜e8 6 ♜f1 ♜c6 Stalemate counterplay enters the game! 7 ♜e3 ♜e8 8 ♜f5 ♜c6 9 ♜h4 Again, 9 ♜f1 ♜g2 10 ♜xg2 is stalemate only. 9... ♜xg2 10 ♜xg2+ ♖g3 11 h4 1-0

Version B:



1 ♜g2 ♖xg7 2 ♖e6 ♜d3 3 ♜h1. Black draws after 3 ♖e5 ♜f1 4 ♜h1 ♜xh3. 3... ♜f1 4 h4 ♖g6 5 ♖e5 ♖h5 6 ♖f4 ♖xh4 7 ♜f5+ ♖h3 8 ♖f3 ♜a6 9 ♜g2#

The last, but definitely not the least interesting study of the award. In our days, twin studies in an endgame studies award are special, and so this work gets a special commendation. I am not convinced that these studies

have twin character, by the way, since they have a completely different content. The similarity is primarily based on superficial features rather than on thematic elements. And so, I have based my judgment on the merit of both compositions, which show instructive conversions of a material advantage.

Perhaps it would have been an idea to work on each scheme separately in order to eliminate the captures in the introduction. Version A could simply start with 4.♘e7 and version B with 2.♘e6; this would still have enough content to stand by itself. However, I appreciate the author's effort to combine both studies into a single work.

Other submitted studies

- A1 No major flaws, but the final stalemate is of limited interest and it does not really cohere with the introduction. There is also no thematic connection between the two main lines.
- A4 I appreciate the author's variation of the Sarychev theme in main line 1: it seems that Black promotes in time to stop the pawn, but his pieces are badly placed. However, the two mainlines do not cohere thematically and the introduction with BTM and the exchange on f5 is not appealing. Black knight and white bishop do not really have functions. Also, mainline 2 is nothing special; this drawing position is well known. I encourage the author to work on mainline 1 and to give up on mainline 2. This will also facilitate a clean technical implementation, in my view.
- A6 The umpteenth study showing the successful fight of queen and knight against the queen. The key is nice, but there is not much original and the black knights and pawns do not play at all.
- A8 Complex content and not devoid of interest for strong OTB players, but unclear aesthetic value and an ugly exchange in the introduction. Precise play makes in itself no good study. I would start the study with 3.♙e4+. The "switchback" is not interesting and at least you start with the thematic material.
- A10 Good technical achievement with interesting systematic movements in solution and try, and a non-trivial choice between the f- and the g-pawn. All in all, however, too "monstrous" for my taste. Moreover, the mainline simply peters out without an interesting finish and the justification of the draw in the try is too analytic.
- A13 This stalemate study has potential and a strong introduction with quiet key move. The implementation is technically clean. However, the theme in main A is neither original nor surprising, and main B is too long and too analytic. Perhaps the authors can somehow make the study more compact.
- A15 Makes a good impression: the introduction has a good flow, and the refutation of the try is instructive. Black needs to keep the white rook on the g- and h-file so that he has in the end either ♙e4+ or ♖d4+. For the rest, the study combines minor promotion with a Sarychev-like play of king and pawn against bishop and king. Not very original, but an interesting combination. My main problem with the study is that I am not sure it is sound. In the try, 7.♖f1! with the idea 7...a1♗ 8.♗×b1 looks like a draw and I do not see any other useful seventh move for

Black. If the author manages to rescue the study, I would consider including it into the final award.

A16 The differentiation between 5.♔f2 and 5.♔f1 is interesting skilfully implemented, but the two lines have different themes, the finish is too well known and there are many captures diluting the aesthetic effect. It is a pity that 7.♖h1+♗xh1 8.♘e3 in the try does not have a unique refutation. I think this study is by all means publishable, but perhaps a different introduction can be found.

A17 Tries to rescue an old cooked study by Korányi. I am not a particular fan of the original either, but it looks more appealing to me since the weaker side manages to draw with precise moves. In the authors' composition, colors are switched and White converts his material advantage (a full rook!) with only moves. I am asking myself what is the main thematic idea of this study and what are the aesthetic elements. If the authors wish to rescue Korányi's study, they should seek for a correct version without switching colors. This one looks rather dull to me.

A18 The most important move of the study is 4.♖f6, instead of the more natural 4.♖h6, away from the pawn. The reason is that after ...♗c7 and ...♗c4+, White needs to have ♖f3, attacking the bishop, without Black being to play ...♗f1 and subsequently ...♗c1. The problem is that the try is not refuted uniquely and that this thematic line stays behind the scenes. So the study just has the main line, but the stalemate motives later on are familiar from the literature.

A22 Long lines without a clear thematic idea. Monstrous position.

A23 See A22.

A24 The interesting question is why the final position wins. The play before is rather obvious, forced and not particularly interesting from an aesthetic point of view. A nice sacrifice like ...♘h4+ does not suffice for inclusion in the award.

A27 Good flow, but features a heavy introduction and a finish that is not particularly exciting to me. In the light of the threat ...b1♖, the move ♗b1 seems the only sensible one. An element of real choice of squares is missing. It is present one move later, when White needs to choose between 11.♗b6 and 11.♗b7. This is a non-trivial difference and the author should give 11.♗b7 as a try. I would also consider to make this work into a win study where White checkmates after 11...♗e8 and has some other (prosaic) win after 11...♗g8? In a draw study, this pretty finish cannot be shown and the study finishes with a rather standard perpetual.

- A28 For a technical study, there are too many pieces in the introduction (Nielsen rule). The material constellation with the doubled pawn is interesting, but precise moves do not make a study and no clear theme is discernible.
- A29a/b Twin studies with knight and pawn against the queen. I do not see the aesthetic content of this work.
- A30 Pretty final move, but not original enough. The capture ... fxe3 and the immobile kings are clear technical flaws.
- A31 The double pin is certainly fascinating, but it deserves a more complete elaboration. ♖f4+ by itself is not enough.
- A32 The main idea is pleasant and appealing.⁵ However, the execution is unfortunate. Way too much material on the board, especially in relation to the rather well-defined main idea. The author should try to improve the implementation of his idea and resubmit at another tourney.
- A33 4. ♖b8 is a nice paradoxical move, but the finish is a bit boring for my taste. I guess more can be done with this complex material constellation. This does not look like an optimal version. I would also start the study with the third move. The introduction with the capture on a7 is superfluous.
- A35 Not enough aesthetically interesting content, and three white pawns on the seventh rank do not excite me either.
- A36a/b Shows a clear symmetry and is of interest for OTB players. However, the non-moving black knight on a8 is definitely a problem and the finish is nothing special either. Perhaps publish in a journal with "b bKg7"?
- A38 Beautiful tactics and highly original theme, but the numerous captures in the introduction dilute the aesthetic effect and make the study look a bit heavy. The theme merits a lighter implementation and I am confident that the authors will be able to find it!

⁵Moreover, I always like when bishops are moving into corners, even if it is just a simple waiting move.

List of Compositions

- A1 A. Avni & V. Tarasiuk: e4/c1 A20 M. Croitor: h1/c3
A2 P. Arestov & P. Rewitz: a6/e2 A21 M. Minski: d5/c8
A3 P. Arestov & M. Hlinka: a6/e8 A22 V. Murashov: f7/c6
A4 Y. Bazlov: f8/c3 A23 V. Murashov: c6/c4
A5 Y. Bazlov: d3/d8 A24 V. Murashov: d5/e2
A6 A. Varitsky: f1/h2 A25 V. Neistadt: h1/b8
A7 A. Gasparyan: c2/h8 A26 S. Nielsen: d6/h5
A8 M. Hlinka & L. Kekely: g8/b3 A27 S. Osintsev: a6/c7
A9 M. Hlinka & L. Kekely: b1/d1 A28 A. Pallier: g5/g8
A10 L. M. González: c4/h8 A29 S. Abramenko: e7/c2
A11 L. M. González: b8/h7 A30 S. Abramenko: h4/h6
A12 M. Gromov & O. Pervakov: A31 S. Abramenko: g1/h8
 d1/c3 A32 A. Stavrietsky: f1/f6
A13 D. Gurgenidze & M. Minski: A33 R. Staudte: a6/d7
 a1/c5 A34 V. Tarasiuk: d7/g8
A14 S. Didukh: d2/e5 A35 A. Shpakovsky: a4/c4
A15 L. Katsnelson: a8/f7 A36 A. Shpakovsky: c6/e7
A16 P. Kiryakov & P. Arestov: e1/g3 A37 N. Ryabinin & K. Sumbatyan:
A17 A. Korányi & R. Staudte: e1/c4 f8/h8
A18 M. Croitor: b1/a7 A38 B. Đurašević & A. Stavrietsky:
A19 M. Croitor: b7/h3 c2/h6

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